

Message Text

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SUBJ: GENERAL ELECTION: GALLUP POLL RESULTS FOR JUNE

SUMMARY. THIS REPORT INAUGURATES THE FIRST IN A MONTHLY SERIES REPORTING KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GALLUP POLITICAL INDEX, WHICH WILL BE PART OF OUR LARGER EXAMINATION OF THE CAMPAIGN RUN-UP AND ANTICIPATED GENERAL ELECTION. GALLUP THIS MONTH SHOWED THE TWO LEADING PARTIES EVENLY PEGGED; A SUBSTANTIAL CALLAGHAN LEAD OVER THATCHER IN TERMS OF VOTER SATISFACTION; SLIGHTLY MORE PEOPLE EXPRESSING DISAPPROVAL THAN APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE; AND A PLURALITY EXPRESSING THE VIEW THAT LABOR WILL WIN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. THE LATTER POINT IS PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT AS IT REVEALS A MARKED SHIFT IN PUBLIC OPINION SINCE LAST MONTH'S POLL. UNEMPLOYMENT AND COST OF LIVING (INFLATION) ARE THE KEY ISSUES OF CONCERN TO

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RESPONDENTS. INTERPRETATIVE NOTES ARE INCLUDED. ON BALANCE THESE RESULTS ARE ENCOURAGING FOR CALLAGHAN.
END SUMMARY

1. THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF REPORTS WHICH WILL SUMMARIZE THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION'S MONTHLY POLITICAL INDEX. ALTHOUGH GALLUP DOES NOT HAVE

THE BEST RECORD FOR ACCURACY IN MEASURING VOTERS' PARTY PREFERENCES, IT IS THE LONGEST RUNNING AND MOST COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF BRITISH POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND APPEARS AT REGULAR INTERVALS, THOUGH ALL QUESTIONS ARE NOT REPEATED EVERY MONTH. WHEN SIGNIFICANT DATA FROM OTHER POLLS ARE AVAILABLE, THEY WILL BE REPORTED HEREIN, BUT GALLUP WILL BE USED AS THE BENCH MARK FOR IDENTIFYING TRENDS AND APPARENTLY SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS IN POPULAR OPINION. THIS REPORT WILL FOCUS ON: PARTY PREFERENCE; APPROVAL/SATISFACTION RATINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERS; VIEWS AS TO THE LIKELY WINNER OF A GENERAL ELECTION; AND DATA ON ISSUES OR PROBLEMS RESPONDENTS CONSIDER OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE.

2. VOTER PREFERENCE - EXCLUDING "DON'T KNOWS", THE GALLUP MID-JUNE SURVEY INDICATED THE CONSERVATIVE AND LABOR PARTIES WERE RUNNING A DEAD HEAT IN TERMS OF RESPONDENTS' STATED VOTING INTENTIONS (45.5 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE FOR EACH PARTY). THIS REPRESENTS A SLIGHT, ALBEIT STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT, INCREASE IN SUPPORT FOR BOTH PARTIES OVER THE PREVIOUS MONTH WHEN THEY WERE DEADLOCKED AT 43.5 PERCENT. THE LIBERAL PARTY'S SUPPORT DROPPED FROM 8.5 PERCENT IN MAY TO 6.0 PERCENT THIS MONTH, AND SUPPORT FOR "OTHER" PARTIES DROPPED TO 3.0 PERCENT FROM 4.5 PERCENT IN MAY. THE ONLY OTHER DATA AVAILABLE, A MORI POLL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(ALSO MID-JUNE) GAVE THE TORIES A STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT ONE PERCENT LEAD.

3. PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERS - THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL RATING DETERIORATED SLIGHTLY FROM THE PREVIOUS MONTH, WITH THOSE EXPRESSING APPROVAL DECLINING TO 40 PERCENT (FROM 41 PERCENT) AND THOSE EXPRESSING DISAPPROVAL INCREASING TO 42 PERCENT (FROM 40 PERCENT). THESE CHANGES ARE STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT. A SIMILAR, BUT STATISTICALLY NOTEWORTHY, DECLINE WAS NOTED IN THE PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS EXPRESSING SATISFACTION WITH CALLAGHAN'S PERFORMANCE. IT FELL FROM 54 TO 50 PERCENT, WHILE THE DISSATISFACTION LEVEL INCREASED FROM 35 TO 41 PERCENT. MRS. THATCHER'S RATING, TOO, DROPPED (FROM 40 TO 38 PERCENT IN THE "SATISFIED" SCALE AND TO 49 FROM 48 PERCENT IN THE "DISAPPROVAL" SCALE), THOUGH THESE CHANGES WERE NOT SIGNIFICANT STATISTICALLY. NEVERTHELESS, CALLAGHAN'S CURRENT 12 PERCENT LEAD OVER MRS. THATCHER ON THIS INDEX CONTINUES TO REPRESENT AN IMPORTANT ADVANTAGE FOR HIM.

4. GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS - GALLUP REGISTERED A SHARP

CHANGE IN PUBLIC OPINION IN THIS INDEX: 43 PERCENT OF
RESPONDENTS BELIEVED LABOR WOULD WIN THE NEXT GENERAL

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ELECTION, AS COMPARED TO ONLY 33 PERCENT LAST MONTH.
THE TORIES, AS WOULD BE EXPECTED, SHOWED A SIMILAR
DECLINE. ONLY 39 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THEY
WOULD WIN THE NEXT ELECTION, AS COMPARED TO 48 PERCENT
IN MAY.

5. URGENT ISSUES - RESPONSES TO THE MONTHLY OPEN-ENDED
QUESTION ASKING VOTERS TO IDENTIFY BRITAIN'S "MOST
URGENT PROBLEMS" REVEALED THAT THE PUBLIC REMAINED MOST
CONCERNED ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT (30 PERCENT) AND THE COST
OF LIVING (27 PERCENT). DISTANT THIRD PLACE WAS OCCU-
PIED BY THE CATCHALL "OTHER ECONOMIC PROBLEMS" (9 PER-
CENT), WITH IMMIGRATION (6 PERCENT) AND LAW AND ORDER
(5 PERCENT) TRAILING BADLY. AGGREGATING THESE RESULTS
WITH RESPONSES TO A QUESTION ASKING RESPONDENTS TO
IDENTIFY THE "SECOND MOST URGENT" ISSUE, LEAVES THE
RELATIVE STANDINGS UNCHANGED. WHILE THERE WERE SLIGHT
CHANGES IN THE PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS IDENTIFYING
EACH ISSUE AS "MOST URGENT", THE ONLY STATISTICALLY
SIGNIFICANT CHANGE INVOLVED UNEMPLOYMENT -- IT DROPPED
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4 PERCENT FROM MAY. THESE RESULTS, INCIDENTALLY, WERE GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH SEVERAL OTHER "CLOSED ENDED" ISSUES INDICES IN THE GALLUP SERIES. AND THE OTHER INDICES SUGGEST LABOR HAS GREATER POPULAR CREDIBILITY IN ITS ABILITY TO HANDLE THE UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION PROBLEM THAN DOES THE TORY PARTY.

6. INTERPRETATIVE NOTES - TO AID IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THESE DATA (OR TO ADD TO THE CONFUSION, DEPENDING ON THE VIEWPOINT), IT IS WORTH NOTING:

- THAT VOTER PREFERENCES FREQUENTLY CHANGE RADICALLY, EVEN REVERSING POSITIONS, IN THE MONTHS PRECEDING A GENERAL ELECTION, ILLUSTRATING THE VOLATILITY OF THE BRITISH ELECTORATE;

- BECAUSE OF DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS AND CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES, CONSERVATIVES TEND TO BENEFIT MOST FROM A DECLINE IN LIBERAL SUPPORT (THE LIBERALS WON 18 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE IN OCTOBER 1974);

- THE LIBERAL VOTE TENDS TO RUN SEVERAL POINTS AHEAD OF THAT PARTY'S PRE-ELECTORAL SHOWING IN THE OPINION POLLS;

- THE DECLINE IN THE MINOR PARTIES' SHARE OF THE VOTE NOTED IN OPINION POLLS, IF MIRRORED IN THE ELECTION RESULTS, WILL REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF A HUNG PARLIAMENT;

- THE PARTY OF THE MOST POPULAR LEADER HAS WON 4 OUT OF THE PAST 5 GENERAL ELECTIONS (EXCEPTION: 1970 WHEN WILSON ENJOYED A 23 POINT LEAD OVER HEATH THE MONTH BEFORE THE ELECTION);

- THE INDEX OF VOTER BELIEFS AS TO THE PROBABLE WINNER OF THE ELECTION HAS BEEN CORRECT ONLY THREE TIMES IN THE PAST FIVE ELECTIONS; AND

- MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE, AND OPINION RESEARCH

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SEEMS TO SUBSTANTIATE, THAT VERY FEW ISSUES ACTUALLY INFLUENCE VOTERS' PARTY PREFERENCES.

7. COMMENT: THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT SHIFT ON POPULAR ATTITUDES DURING THE PAST MONTH WAS THE MARKED CHANGE IN OPINION AS TO THE PROBABLE WINNER OF THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, WHERE LABOR MOVED AHEAD OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY BY 4 PERCENT, REVERSING THE TORIES' 15 POINT LEAD IN MAY. GIVEN LABOR'S DETERIORATION -- ALBEIT OFTEN STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT -- IN THE

OTHER INDICES (GOVERNMENT APPROVAL AND SATISFACTION WITH CALLAGHAN), THIS SHIFT WAS SOMETHING OF AN ANOMALY. SUCH APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY CHANGES IN PUBLIC OPINION, HOWEVER, ARE NOT UNCOMMON IN OPINION SURVEYS, PARTICULARLY IN BRITAIN WHERE PUBLIC ATTITUDES TEND TO BE MERCURIAL. NEVERTHELESS, THE RESULTS OF THE JUNE GALLUP POLL APPEAR, ON BALANCE, TO BE GENERALLY FAVORABLE FOR CALLAGHAN -- LABOR HAS REMAINED LEVELLY PEGGED WITH THE CONSERVATIVES SINCE APRIL; HE CONTINUES TO ENJOY A SUBSTANTIAL PERSONAL LEAD OVER MRS. THATCHER; MORE RESPONDENTS BELIEVE HIS PARTY WILL WIN THE ELECTION; AND HIS PARTY ENJOYS AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE CONSERVATIVES IN THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES.

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